

27 March 2022 St Carthage's Annual General Meeting: Report from the Chair

- 1. Acknowledgment of country**
- 2. Minutes of Previous AGM**
- 3. Report from the St Carthage's Pastoral Council Chair**
- 4. Approval of minor corrections to the Parish constitution**
- 5. Proposal about elections to the Pastoral Council**
- 6. Report from the Finance Committee**
- 7. Report from Fr Joe Caddy**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people
the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered.

We celebrate their continuing culture
and their care for this land over many generations.

We pray today with faith and hope for the
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and
ourselves that God's mercy and justice will present
in our lives, our communities, and in the heart of our nation.

We commit ourselves to work with them for
reconciliation, recognition and justice.

I would also like to acknowledge a number of individuals for their service to St Carthage's Parish, and to the Pastoral Council, in particular: Gerard Barns (Oct 2019-Feb 2021), Berise Heasly (June 2018-July 2021), Jonathan Clayton (August 2020-July 2021), Carmel Frost (March 2020-December 2021) and Judith Benson (May – December 2021). There are six elected positions. Members serve a four-year term, but if someone steps down before the end of that term, the Council is able to co-opt someone to serve the remaining period. I am particularly grateful to the six current members, alongside the two ex officio members, Fr Joe Caddy and Michael Pirotta, Chair of the Finance Council (or committee as it is known) Besides myself, the five other Council members are Heather Weedon, Jack Rendle, Rosemary Sheehan and two appointed this year to fill vacancies, namely Sean McManus (who gave a Lenten reflection last week and Penny McCann. I shall come back to the matter of elections to the Pastoral Council, at the end of this report.

As I am sure, all will understand, the Parish of St Carthage's has faced many challenges over the last twelve months, in the wake of the continuing Covid19 pandemic. The church was effectively closed during three periods of lockdown in Melbourne (31 March to 12 May 2020; 9 July to 27 October 2020, and then again between 28 May and 21 October 2021. Fr Michael Elligate officially retired in early May 2020. Fr Joe Caddy then took over as parish priest, only to be obliged to suspend services shortly after. I certainly speak for the whole parish in voicing our gratitude, both Fr Michael for his 34 years service to the parish, and to Fr Joe for picking up the reigns at an enormously difficult time for him as vicar general of the archdiocese of Melbourne as a whole, still a major responsibility for him. In July 2021, Fr Michael was offered a book specially compiled book, *A Parson's Tale* – with contributions from fifty 'pilgrims' about various aspects of his ministry, including his trips to the Holy Land and on the Camino. No parish funds were involved and

that the project team (Morag Fraser, Dennis Green, Berise Heasly, Richard Olive and Heather Weedon) succeeded in selling out the whole print run of 300 by early February 2022.

On 16 May 2021, the parish held its AGM, delayed because of the lockdown over previous months. On 4 July 2021, Fr Joe Caddy convened a Special General Meeting of the Parish, that picked up on issues raised at the AGM, at which he explained the particular issues which he was concerned about, namely about sharing responsibility for pastoral care within the parish, given the limitations on his own time. Richard Curtain offered reflections from an earlier (2017) survey of the parish, while there was also discussion about the possibility of engaging a pastoral co-ordinator (but only if parish funds allowed). It was also explained that the Parish constitution had to conform with canon law, which speaks of two councils being established to advise the parish priest, namely a Finance Council and a Pastoral Council. We satisfy these requirements by having the chair of the Finance Council (commonly known as a Committee) as an ex officio member of the Pastoral Council, to which he presents the budget, and reciprocally the Chair of the Pastoral Council as being ex officio on the Finance Council. The parish meeting on 4 July also identified various areas of outreach, in which the parish could develop, above all relating to (1) liturgy, (2) social outreach and (3) education and spirituality. It spoke of the need for a Communications strategy, using the website as a point of communication, and working with the only recently appointed parish secretary, Leanne Pereira. We are all grateful for her work in assembling a database of current emails, and her weekly newsletter, coupled with keeping the parish website updated.

One consequence of the Covid lockdown has been a reduction in mass attendance. We were aware of this at the meeting of 4 July, where we spoke much about the need for greater participation in parish affairs. In a paradoxical way, Covid19 accelerated that process by making many members of the parish (even the most technologically challenged) familiar with zoom technology. From early on, the suspension of physical services led to Fr Joe Caddy establishing online reflections on the Sunday readings at 10am discussions between June and October 2021. While physical services have resumed, these Sunday zoom sessions continue for those concerned about excessive mingling. I have run a shared reflection session on Sunday 12.00 noon (from now on fortnightly, rather than weekly).

There have also been a number of discussion groups (either zoom or in hybrid format) in the parish, meeting around various themes. One was with John Warhurst (ANU, about renewal), another with Susan Pascoe (about the synod on synodality). Along with Richard Curtain and Claire Renkin, we got a group together to formulate a 250 word submission to the forthcoming bishops' synod in Rome, about synodality. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to that discussion.

Another discussion we held by zoom was with Sister Jill O'Brien about liturgy, which provoked the involvement of at least 20 people. This has led to an informal network of individuals concerned with liturgy at all three masses. In matters of music, especially for major feasts, this involves myself, Morag Fraser and Roger Rassool. I am grateful to Mary Galea, Maree Rabach and Tony Anderson, who set up the church at each of the three masses and all who have offered to do readings. With Heather Weedon, we want to see if it can help to establish a roster arrangement for readings, so people know in advance if they are reading. There is also an issue with declining attendance the Sunday 5pm mass. The parish is also

grateful to our resident musicians, in particular Juliette Hughes and Rick Norward, as well as Roger and Anne Rassool for doing music. Richard Curtain has suggested raising funds to promote music in our liturgies, particularly at 5pm. This is a matter on which I invite comment, although any decision on these would have to go through the Finance Council.

We have also instituted reflections from parishioners over the seasons of Advent and Lent, a tradition that we wish to maintain. The Council is also very grateful to John Drennan for his offering hospitality after 10am mass.

Events that are coming up include the Parish dinner at the Treacy Centre (Sat 4 June). Another being planned by Chris Watson and myself, is scheduled for Sun 15 May, the feast day of St Carthage, perhaps to be called: Remembering St Carthage and the refugees. It will celebrate both a remarkable saint of 7th century Ireland, who had a particular concern for lepers), as well as calling to mind those who are refugees, excluded from our own society in 21st century Australia.

There is still more we can do in the areas of social outreach. David Forrest is chair of the St Vincent de Paul conference, which does marvellous work in areas of need. He is grateful for the donations received for the Christmas appeal, and those made in memory of Del Durrant. He would welcome any new members to join our conference and visiting teams.

With return to physical meeting in the church, it would be great to develop educational activities. There is a Centring Spirituality group, organized by Liz Dohrmann and Susan Frykberg, and a Feminist Theology group, chaired by Heather Weedon, and a Women's Reading Group organized by Mary Roberts.

St Carthage's was invited to join an ecumenical Yoo-rrook group, chaired by Ray Gormann, a Uniting Church Minister (Church of all Nations, Carlton), concerned with developing a truth-telling process about past injustices in dialogue with indigenous peoples in Melbourne. John Drennan has represented the parish at an exploratory meeting on 31 January 2022.

Our parish is only as strong as those parishioners who give their time to coming together. I am enormously grateful to all those who have volunteered to give their time and energy in any way. It is only through such good will that we build up the body of Christ.

Elections to the Pastoral Council

We currently have a full quota of six members of the Pastoral Council, three long established and three recently appointed. Council members can be re-nominated for up to three 4-year terms. The current members are:

- Heather Weedon (appointed 22 Feb 2017, with her four-year term officially expired in Feb 2021, but because of the Covid crisis was extended to June 2022, when she will be stepping down).
- Jack Rendle (appointed in Feb 2017), our sterling secretary to the Pastoral Council whose four year term officially ended in Feb 2021, but extended because of the pandemic.
- Rosemary Sheehan (appointed Feb 2019).
- Constant Mews (appointed July 2021), co-opted in place of Gerard Barns
- Penny McCann, co-opted February 2022 in place of Carmel Frost.
- Sean McManus, co-opted February 2022 in place of Judy Benson (expiry Jan 2024)

The constitution requires that elections be held for half of the members of the council should be held every two years, on the first Sunday in June. Because of the disruptions posed by Covid in 2020 and a significant number of members stepping down within their term, we have not been able to keep up with this timetable. The Council has decided that My recommendation to the parish is that elections be held for three of the six positions on 5 June 2022 (those currently held by Weedon, Rendle and Sheehan). Heather has already indicated that she will be stepping down from the Council in June 2022. The two other councillors are free to stand for a subsequent 4 year term, if they wish. At the same time, any member of the parish is interested in standing for any of these positions, should let me know, and provide a candidate's statement and photo by Sun 1 May 2022. Elections will be held on 5 June if there are more candidates than position. Constant Mews, Sean McManus and Penny McCann, may re-nominate for election in June 2024. No motion is necessary to follow this procedure, which is laid down by the constitution. Nonetheless, I would urgently encourage all parishioners to participate in the next round of elections, to take place in early June, and consider standing for Council at that time.